

WANTED: ONE GREAT EMPLOYEE

FACILITATOR GUIDE

SESSION OVERVIEW

This 45-minute session provides students with an overview of basic work ethics. Students will examine the impact that work ethic has on employers, employees, and the public. They will discuss the behaviors and attitudes necessary to be an effective worker and how this may be of value.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Upon completing this exercise, students will be able to:

1. Identify some of the skills necessary for productive relationships and effective communication in the workplace.
2. Display knowledge of appropriate personal management skills such as dependability, dress (apparel), and conduct.
3. Understand that attitude contributes toward being considered a valued worker – that a good attitude can be demonstrated by showing initiative, and by taking pride and ownership in one's work.

MATERIALS

Hand Out 1 – Roles and Consequences

Hand Out 2 – Letter of Reference Template

Hand Out 3 – Letter of Reference Sample – Employment

Job Smart > Tips for staying employed, Alberta Employment and Immigration

OVERVIEW AND TIMELINES

Introduction – What is Work Ethic?	10 Minutes
Self-Assessment	10 Minutes
Group Work and Debriefing	20 Minutes
Wrap Up – Reflection and Reference Letter	5 Minutes

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ACTIVITIES

INTRODUCTION – WHAT IS WORK ETHIC?

Initiate a preliminary discussion of work ethic by polling students on their personal experiences with work. This can include paid employment, volunteer work, or work experience arranged through school.

Introduce the topic of “work ethic” as the conduct of the worker. Most students have had work experience of some nature, thus they have had an opportunity to demonstrate some degree of work ethic.

Students may have experienced the work ethic of others, as coworkers. If students have not had work experience, they may have encountered work ethic while being a customer.

Challenge students with the following statements and question them on how each scenario may affect (1) the employer or co-worker, (2) the employee, and (3) the public:

- Your shift starts at 8:00 a.m. and you show up at 8:05 a.m.
- You do not wash your hands after using the bathroom
- You did not do a task well (e.g. mopping the floor)
- You use profanity while working with the public
- You call in sick five minutes before your shift starts

Conclude with the definition of ethic: (*noun*) a moral principle or set of principles. The Oxford Paperback Dictionary, Oxford University Press, 1994.

Clarify that work ethic is the principles by which a worker conducts him or herself.

Note to instructor: Although the issue of work ethic can be very broad (extending to discrimination and sexual harassment), the focus of this kit is on the conduct of the worker.

SELF-ASSESSMENT

Distribute Job Smart>Tips for staying employed, Alberta Employment and Immigration. The following activity allows students to do a preliminary self-assessment of some personal and work skills.

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Have students do the exercises on pages 8 and 9. Read aloud, or have students read, the brief employers' stories at the bottom of these two pages.

GROUP WORK AND DEBRIEFING

This activity will allow students to take on the role of employer, employee, or the public. They will discuss work ethic related to a number of different areas: relationships and communication, personal management, and attitude of worker.

Students will be encouraged to examine the positive or negative consequences of the particular actions outlined in the **Roles and Consequences Hand Out 1**.

Divide the class into 3 or 6 groups, depending upon size. Assign 1/3 of the groups the role of employer, 1/3 the role of employee, and 1/3 the role of the public. Distribute both pages of **Roles and Consequences Hand Out 1**.

Remind each group of their assigned role and instruct them to document how the action statements on **Roles and Consequences Hand Out 1** may affect them in that role. Ask students to carefully read each action statement as they are completing this handout.

Allow 10 minutes for this activity. Debrief the results with the students by discussing each action statement and the consequence each group (whether employer, employee, or the public) has assigned to it. Refer to **Top Up List for Facilitators** to conclude discussion.

TOP UP LIST FOR FACILITATORS

RELATIONSHIP AND COMMUNICATION

Employer

- Communicate respectfully with employer.
- When in doubt, go to your boss or supervisor, especially for task clarity.
- If you are having a conflict talk to the person then go to your boss or supervisor.

Co-Worker

- Keep relationships business-like, not personal.
- Avoid inappropriate comments about physical attributes.
- Visiting should be done during breaks, before or after work – not during work time.

Public

- Treat public with respect.
- Do not use profanity.
- Do not comment on physical attributes of customers.
- Learn and use the protocol established by the employer when dealing with the public:
 1. How to handle an intoxicated customer.
 2. What to do if a customer is injured.
 3. How to manage a rude customer.

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PERSONAL MANAGEMENT

Dependability

- Arrive on time for work and after breaks.
- Call in as soon as possible if sick.
- Your work performance will follow you, so do your best.
- Previous work experience may be checked out by future employers.
- Give appropriate notice when quitting – talk to your supervisor or boss.

Dress

- Arrive at work clean and neat.
- Good personal hygiene is important.
- Adhere to the dress code where appropriate. How you dress for work should not be a personal statement.

Conduct

- Do not come to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol – safety is at stake.
- Work diligently during work time.
- Stay on task.

ATTITUDE

Initiative

- If you are done your assigned task, look for something else that has to be done. You are getting paid for your time.
- With the employer's permission, try new effective and efficient ways of doing things. He will appreciate your initiative.

Pride

- Your labour is a work of art – consider the gas pump attendant who cleans all the windows and lights vs. the attendant who cleans only the front window.
- Doing your best will have positive results – i.e. servers who take extra care with their customers get more tips.

Ownership

- Work as if the business is your own and you will be rewarded – i.e. raises, promotion, more responsibility, independence, or bonuses.

WRAP UP – REFLECTION AND REFERENCE LETTER

Encourage students' awareness that their work ethic on the job is a reflection of themselves: their attitudes, beliefs, and values. A principal recently commented, "The student's reputation will follow him or her. Work habits at school carry forward into the world of work."

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Have students ask themselves, “How do I become a valued employee at work, one that will get extra hours, be kept on when others are being laid off, be given raises and promotions even though others were next in line, and how will this benefit me?” What more do they want from their work, other than a pay cheque?

Demonstrating exceptional work ethic can be very rewarding. It can lead to good references from teachers, supervisors, or employers, access to educational scholarships, or entrance into post-secondary training.

REFERENCE LETTER

Have students reflect their own work ethic in a reference letter. Present the following challenge:

You have requested a letter of reference from your employer. The employer replies, “Why don’t you write a draft of the letter for me to review and edit?”

Have students write a letter of reference for themselves. Have them define the specific benefits that they have brought to their workplace. If students have not experienced paid employment, they can reference home-based responsibilities.

To reinforce this, refer to **Handout 2 and 3** and make reference to Job Smart>Tips for staying employed, Alberta Employment and Immigration.

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APPENDIX

As time permits, facilitators may wish to include the following scenarios for discussion.

Bernie works part time at a drug store. His employer is impressed with how capable he is and soon has him covering the front of the store on his own when business is slow. Bernie begins to help himself to a bag of chips or a chocolate bar. He feels it is no big deal because the cost to the employer is minimal.

*What is the cost to Bernie if he is caught?
If you were a co-worker, how would you feel?*

Cindy has been hired by a food store that has a policy about facial piercing. The store is comfortable with earrings, but nothing else. Cindy accepts this position knowing about the policy, but shows up for work with her nose and lip rings in. The supervisor reminds Cindy of the policy, but Cindy continues to wear the jewelry. The company sends Cindy a letter about the policy, and Cindy's mother wonders if this is a human rights issue. Meanwhile, the other employees are resenting the fact that Cindy is not following policy.

*The mother is incorrect because the policy was in place prior to Cindy's hiring.
Cindy must comply because she agreed to the dress code by accepting the job.*

*How would you feel if you were one of the co-workers?
Is Cindy's position valid? Is the employer's?*

Jay is a grade 11 student with a work experience placement at an automotive garage and convenience store. He assumes that he is just "free labour" for his employer, and is often late or does not come in at all for scheduled shifts. Jay eventually gets fired.

*What are the potential consequences to Jay?
How will this impact his future work?*

Dana has recently started a job in a busy office setting. She finds it difficult to keep track of several things at once. After a few weeks, the other employees feel that she is not pulling her weight. They are becoming less helpful and some are a bit mean to her. One employee plays a prank on Dana that makes her look incompetent.

*What would you do as the supervisor? What would you do if you were Dana?
What would you do if you were one of the co-workers?*



ROLES AND CONSEQUENCES

ASSIGNED ROLE: _____

*In your role, discuss the positive and negative consequences of the following employee behaviors and attitudes. Have one member of the group document the consequences using **Handout 1 Page 2** and select a member of your group to present your feedback to the class.*

Relationships and Communication

1. Employee asks for instruction when he/she doesn't understand something
2. Employee comments on physical attributes of co-workers or public
3. Employee visits with co-workers during work time
4. Employee uses profanity in work setting
5. Employee treats public with respect
6. Employee helps other workers without being asked

Personal Management

1. Employee is not on time after breaks
2. Employee calls in as soon as possible if sick
3. Employee gives no notice when quitting
4. Employee is clean and neat, has good hygiene
5. Employee does not follow dress code
6. Employee comes to work under the influence of drugs or alcohol

Attitude of Worker

1. Employee initiates tasks rather than standing idle
2. Employee shows enthusiasm about the job
3. Employee knows nothing about the company
4. Employee completes all tasks to the employer's standards or better
5. Employee suggests solutions to problems



ROLES AND CONSEQUENCES

ASSIGNED ROLE: _____

*In **your role**, discuss whether each behavior or attitude listed is positive (+), negative (-) or possibly both. Explain the consequence(s) of each action from your role's point of view.*

Relationships and Communication

Number	+/-/Both	Consequence(s)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Personal Management

Number	+/-/Both	Consequence(s)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Attitude of Worker

Number	+/-/Both	Consequences(s)
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		



LETTER OF REFERENCE TEMPLATE

Writer's Information: Address and postal code

Date: Current date

Contact Information: Who the letter is written to, position, company name, address, postal code

Salutation: Address the person as Dear Ms. Brown, Dear Dr. Frost, etc.

Paragraph 1:

The first paragraph explains your connection to the person you are recommending, including how you know them and why you are qualified to write a reference letter.

Paragraph 2:

The second paragraph contains specific information about the person you are writing about, including why they are qualified, what they contribute and why you are providing a reference letter.

In this paragraph include specific information about required skills matching them to the position they are applying for.

Summary:

This section of the recommendation letter contains a brief summary of why you are recommending the person. State that you "highly recommend" the person or you "recommend without reservation", or something similar.

Conclusion:

Conclude the letter by offering to provide more information such as a phone number and e-mail address.

Sincerely,

Writer's Signature

Writer's Name



Reference Letter Sample – Employment

5742 67th Street
Piper Creek, Alberta
T5N 0E3

June 4, 2009

Mr. Sam Smith
Manager
Sam's Restaurant
2978 Jumping Pond
Piper Creek, Alberta
T4N 1Z8

Dear Mr. Smith,

It is my pleasure to recommend Katie Right as a candidate for employment. I have been Katie's Manager for two years while she has been working as a Grocery Clerk at my store, Jan's Grocery.

Katie is a very conscientious worker who displays excellent communication skills. In addition, she is extremely well organized, reliable and computer literate. Katie can work independently and is able to follow through to ensure that she gets the job done. She is flexible and has the ability to effectively multi-task. Her pleasant personality is not only an asset when working with the customers but is also one of the reasons that she fits in so well with our team.

I would highly recommend Katie. If Katie's performance in our store is a good indication of how she would work in your restaurant, she would be a tremendous asset to your business. Her people skills and desire to learn will definitely benefit any employer!

If you have any further questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (403) 750-3456 or on my cell at (403) 506-7777.

Sincerely,

Jan Hanna

Jan Hanna